

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-30

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DRAFTED BY EA/TB - VTOMSETH:MFG

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 169426

EXDIS - FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, EAID, ETRN, CB

SUBJECT: COMMERCIAL CONTRACTS TO REPLACE RELIANCE ON

USAF C-130S

REF: A. PHNOM PENH 6390

B. PHNOM PENH 3145

1. WE FULLY APPRECIATE DESIRABILITY OF FINDING SOME VIABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR USAF AIR DELIVERY IN CAMBODIA TO REDUCE EXPOSURE OF USAF AIRCRAFT AND CREWS TO ENEMY ACTION. WE WERE DISAPPOINTED THAT EARLIER PLANS FOR ARRANGING IN-COUNTRY RICE DELIVERY (REF B) WERE NEVER CONSUMMATED.

2. IN CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES, WE SUGGEST APPROACHING PROPOSAL FOR COMMERCIAL AIR DROPS BY THAI-BASED FIRM WITH GREAT CAUTION, FROM OUR VIEW DEAL WITH ANY CAMBODIA-BASED AIRLINE WOULD BE PREFERABLE, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR US TO GET RTG ACQUIESCENCE FOR SOME QUALIFIED FIRM (SUCH AS CONTINENTAL AIR SERVICES INC. OR BIRD) WITH EXPERIENCE IN THE AREA TO UNDERTAKE OPERATIONS WITHIN CAMBODIA, E.G., EX BATTAMBANG, WHILE UTILIZING THAI BASES FOR HEAVY MAINTENANCE. HOWEVER WE DO NOT CONSIDER IT

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LIKELY THAT THAI-AM, THAI AIRWAYS OR ANY OTHER QUASI-RTG

FIRM WOULD BE PREPARED TO TAKE CONSPICUOUS ROLE IN DIRECT
AND DANGEROUS SUPPORT FOR GKR ENCLAVES.

3. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR MAY 7 PROPOSED USAID
CAMBODIA OFFICE IN BANGKOK, DEFENSE MINISTER THAWI
REFLECTED GREAT CONCERN LEST EVEN USG PERSONNEL STATIONED
IN BANGKOK WOULD BY IMPLICATION TIE RTG TOO CLOSELY TO
GKR SUPPORT. WE FEAR THIS REFLECTS SPREADING DESIRE
WITHIN RTG HIGH COUNCILS TO DISASSOCIATE SELVES FROM
IDENTIFICATION WITH LON NOL REGIME. WE WILL WATCH FOR
OTHER SIGNS OF ANY SUCH ADVERSE DEVELOPMENT, BUT WOULD
NOT WISH TO STIMULATE REACTION BY SEEKING HIGH-LEVEL
COMMITMENT FOR COMMERCIAL AIR SUPPORT BY THAI FIRMS. KISSINGER

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